

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon August 16, 2020

Luke 18: 15 – 17 “Receive the Kingdom like a Little Child, or Not at All”

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." 15 Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 20 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' " 21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." 22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. 24 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" 27 But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

I. Introduction

- a. In context, this episode serves to confirm the childlike humility and faith of the tax collector while also revealing the failure of the proud Pharisee and the self-reliant, rich ruler. In addition, the Lord Jesus displays His love and priority toward little infants and children while setting these little ones out as examples for all who would receive the Kingdom of God.
- b. Luke 18: 15 – 17 “Receive the Kingdom like a Little Child, or Not at All”
 - i. V15a: Some bring their infants to Jesus
 - ii. V15b: The disciples rebuke these people
 - iii. V16: Jesus corrects and instructs the disciples regarding little ones
 - iv. V17: Childlike reception of the Kingdom of God required for entry
 - v. Questions to know, love, and obey God

II. V15a: Some bring their infants to Jesus

- a. “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them”
- b. Bock “Luke gives the setting briefly: people were bringing infants or young children so that Jesus might touch them. Βρέφος (*brephos*, little ones), here used

only by Luke, is more specific than παιδίον (*paidion*, child). In Luke 2:12, 16; Acts 7:19; and 1 Pet. 2:2, βρέφος refers to young babies”¹

- c. So, who are these people, and why are they bringing their infants to Jesus that He might touch them?
 - d. Calvin “We must observe the intention of those who present the children; for if there had not been a deep-rooted conviction in their minds, that the power of the Spirit was at his disposal, that he might pour it out on the people of God, it would have been unreasonable to present their children. There is no room, therefore, to doubt, that they ask for them a participation of his grace; and so, by way of amplification, Luke adds the particle *also*; as if he had said that, after they had experienced the various ways in which he assisted adults, they formed an expectation likewise in regard to *children*, that, if he *laid hands on them*, they would not leave him without having received some of the gifts of the Spirit.”²
 - e. Think about it. These people had observed Jesus bringing His power and grace to adults, and they desired the same for their little children, even believing their little ones were not incapable of receiving the power of the Spirit in spite of their complete helplessness and pre-cognitive capacity. They believed Jesus was able to make His grace efficacious to their little ones. They looked to Jesus’ limitless power and grace, not their little ones’ limitations.
 - f. Henry “Those who are themselves blessed in Christ should desire to have their children also blessed in him, and should hereby testify the true honour they have for Christ, by their making use of him, and the true love they have for their children, by their concern about their souls. They brought to him *infants*, very young, not able to go, sucking children, as some think. None are too little, too young, to bring to Christ, who knows how to show kindness to them that are not capable of doing service to him.”³
 - g. It was very natural for simple, faithful Jews to bring their children to Jesus. After all, they had brought their infants for circumcision, trusting that their little ones are part of God’s covenant. This text today is a demonstration that in Jesus Christ, believing parents today have no reason to believe we cannot bring even our littlest ones to Him for His touch, that even then our little ones may participate in His grace and power. Like believing Jews then, Christian parents today can also look to Jesus’ power and grace rather than their little ones’ limitations.
- III. V15b: The disciples rebuke these people
- a. “but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.”

¹ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1469). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

² Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke](#) (Vol. 2, p. 389). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

³ Henry, M. (1994). [Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume](#) (p. 1891). Peabody: Hendrickson.

- b. The disciples did not understand the foundational wisdom of these parents, the worthiness of these covenant little ones to be brought to Him, nor the infinite grace and kindness of God in Christ to work His power and grace even in infants.
 - c. And, Jesus was very busy, so their response was also likely associated with their reasonable efforts to help Christ with His time and energy. But, did they also have an elevated sense of self-importance in their response?
 - d. Henry *“When the disciples saw it, they thought, if this were admitted, it would bring endless trouble upon their Master, and therefore they rebuked them, and frowned upon them.”*⁴
 - e. If the disciples did not resist adults coming to Jesus, then why did they resist infants and children?
 - i. Bock *“The disciples thought that the action was inappropriate, so they rebuked... those making the effort to see Jesus. It is not indicated whether they made physical efforts or verbal remarks to stop them. Nonetheless, they thought that Jesus did not need to be bothered with such trivialities. In their view, the children’s presence infringed on Jesus’ time. Nolland (1993a: 881) suggests that their motive was their exaggerated sense of self-importance.”*⁵
- IV. V16: Jesus corrects and instructs the disciples regarding little ones
- a. 16 *“But Jesus called them to Him and said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.”*
 - b. *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them”*
 - i. Jesus is also the author of these words:
 1. Ps 137:8,9 *“O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, Happy the one who repays you as you have served us! 9 Happy the one who takes and dashes Your little ones against the rock!”*
 2. Romans 9:10-13 *“And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac 11 (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), 12 it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” 13 As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”*
 - ii. How can we reconcile these texts? *“Let the little children come to Me”* and the happiness of dashing little ones against rocks and God hating a baby in the womb? Is this a contradiction? No, it’s the covenant.
 - iii. The children of believing parents are welcome before Jesus Christ, not because they are such sweet and adorable intrinsically, but because they are in the covenant according to His grace and promises. Children of those outside the covenant are not at all safe in the Presence of God.

⁴ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1891). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁵ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1469). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- iv. Henry “It is the mind of Christ that *little children* should be brought to him, and presented as living sacrifices to his honour: “*Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not; let nothing be done to hinder them, for they shall be as welcome as any.*” *The promise is to us, and to our seed; and therefore he that has the dispensing of promised blessings will bid them welcome to him with us. The children of those who belong to the kingdom of God do likewise belong to that kingdom... If the parents be members of the visible church, the children are so too; for, if the root be holy, the branches are so.*”⁶
- v. 1 Cor 7:12-14 “But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy”
- vi. Strawbridge “...there are numerous explicit texts on the inclusion of believers’ children in the New Covenant (Deut 30:6; Jer 31:36,37; Acts 2:39), in the Church (Eph. 1:1; 6:1-4; Col 1:2; 3:20; 1 Cor 7:14), and the Kingdom (Matt 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16).”
- c. “for such is the Kingdom of God”
 - i. Now, Jesus goes beyond these specific little ones’ inclusion in the Kingdom of God, to then reference qualities of all infants and children that define critical aspects of faith. Their helplessness, dependence and simple trust show us the way to receive the Kingdom.
 - ii. Calvin “Under this term he includes both *little children* and those who resemble them; ... taking occasion from the present occurrence, he intended to exhort his disciples to lay aside malice and pride, and put on the nature of *children*.”⁷
 - iii. Henry “So welcome are *children* to Christ that those grown people are most welcome to him who have in them most of the disposition of children”⁸
 - iv. Where Jesus Christ Is, there is the Kingdom of God. Those infants brought to Jesus Christ could not have brought themselves to Him. Those little ones rested in His Holy arms, sat in His tender lap, and simply received His loving touch, His Divine benediction, with gladness and faith, showing us all how we are to receive the Kingdom of God. Their infant

⁶ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1891). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁷ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 391). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁸ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1891). Peabody: Hendrickson.

helplessness shows us the sovereignty of God in our new birth, salvation. Their reliance upon Him, trusting in His care, as little toddlers, shows us the way of sanctification.

- V. V17: Childlike reception of the Kingdom of God required for entry
- a. 17 “Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”
 - b. Here, our Lord finalizes this displayed truth with these clear words. The helplessness and total dependence of infants and children teaches us how we are to receive the Kingdom of God.
 - i. Henry “*Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, that is, receive the benefits of it with humility and thankfulness, not pretending to merit them as the Pharisee did, but gladly owning himself indebted to free grace for them, as the publican did; unless a man be brought to this self-denying frame he shall in no wise enter into that kingdom. They must receive the kingdom of God as children, receive their estates by descent and inheritance, not by purchase, and call it their Father’s gift.*”⁹
 - ii. Sproul “Jesus, here, lays down a condition for entering the kingdom of God. This should make our ears perk up, lest we overlook that prerequisite. He says that unless each of us enters the kingdom of God as a child, we will not enter it at all. So often this passage is interpreted to mean that Christians are always to have a child-like faith, in the sense that we ought always to keep our faith very simple, and not allow it to be encumbered by diligent study of the word of God. However, there is a difference between a childlike faith and a childish faith. A childish faith chooses to remain immature, but a childlike faith, the kind that Jesus calls for, is a simple, confident trust in, and dependence on, our heavenly Father, a trust born of humility rather than arrogance. The difference is crucial. The apostle Paul exhorts us ‘in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature’ (1 Cor. 14:20). When it comes to our salvation, we must have a childlike trust in God’s mercy and grace or we will miss the kingdom of God.”¹⁰
- VI. Questions to know, love and obey God

⁹ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1891). Peabody: Hendrickson.

¹⁰ Sproul, R. C. (1999). [*A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*](#) (pp. 336–337). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.